



BOB CASEY

FIGHTING *for* PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The Promoting Advancement through Transit Help (PATH) to College Act

U.S. Senators Bob Casey, Kirsten Gillibrand, Jeanne Shaheen and Chris Van Hollen

With increasing college costs, community colleges represent a valuable, comparatively affordable resource for educating and training the next generation of workers. In fall 2021, community college enrollment accounted for approximately 30 percent of undergraduate enrollment in U.S. postsecondary institutions receiving federal funding. Unfortunately, transportation is a structural barrier that can put postsecondary education, even more supposedly financially accessible options, out of reach for students.

Per a report from the Seldin/Haring-Smith Foundation, 99 percent of community college students commute to and from campus. However, more than 37 percent of community colleges are over a mile away from public transit stops, and over 18 percent are more than 4.5 miles from a stop. In addition, transportation costs for students at public, two-year colleges continue to increase, averaging \$1,930 for the 2023-2024 school year. Accessing an education should not be functionally and financially inaccessible to students, particularly low-income students. A car should not be among college expenses along with tuition and textbooks.

To address this issue and ensure that more students can take advantage of the resources offered by community colleges, the *PATH to College Act* would direct the U.S. Department of Transportation to issue grants to public transit agencies partnered with eligible colleges to add stops at community colleges or to expand or redesign their routes so that they can better serve community colleges in their service area. Grants could also be used to improve or add access to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal colleges, and minority-serving institutions. Importantly, the bill directs the Department of Transportation to prioritize applications serving institutions where more than 25 percent of students receive Federal Pell Grants to help ensure low-income students most in need of transportation assistance receive it. By making it easier and more affordable for students to get to college, we can bolster our workforce, strengthen our economy, and increase American competitiveness.

This legislation has been endorsed by Higher Learning Advocates, the Institute for Higher Education Policy, uAspire, and the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors.